

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13
/079 W

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R 210930Z DEC 76
FM AMCONSUL ASMARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4286
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON
COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN
COMIDEASTFOR
NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA
NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI
CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 1078

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS ET
SUBJECT: SECURITY AND TRANSPORTATION SITUATION

REF: (A) ASMARA 1068 DTG 200910Z DEC 76 (B) NAVCOMMUNIT
201530Z DEC 76

1. THE LAST WEEK WITNESSED SEVERAL SMALL, ISOLATED, YET BRUTAL INCIDENTS WHICH REFLECT THE HARSH NATURE OF THE CONTINUING INSURGENCY IN ASMARA. ON DEC. 16, THREE INSURGENT SAPPERS WERE REPORTEDLY KILLED IN ASMARA WHEN AN EXPLOSIVE DEVICE THEY WERE WORKING WITH EXPLODED ACCIDENTLY. ON DEC. 17 AN EPMG "INFORMER" WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN ASSASSINATED BY REBEL GUNMEN. ON DEC. 18, TWO MEMBERS OF THE JOINT COMMAND'S "DEATH SQUAD" WERE SHOT TO
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DEATH IN AN ASMARA BAR BY INSURGENT ASSASSINS. EARLIER THAT MORNING A MUSLIM MAN WAS FOUND DEAD ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN, KILLED BY ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER. THE SAME DAY INSURGENTS SEVERED THE WATER PIPE FROM ASMARA'S SOLE REMAINING RESERVOIR, DISRUPTING WATER SERVICE. THE BREAK IS CONSIDERED MINOR AND A REPAIR CREW IS READY TO RESTORE WATER AS SOON AS AN ESCORT FORCE IS

PROVIDED.

2. ON THE NIGHT OF DEC. 19, INSURGENT RUSTLERS SUFFERED A MAJOR SETBACK ON CONFRONTING AN EPMG PATROL, LOSING AT LEAST FIVE MEN KILLED (REFTEL B). ONE LOCAL REPORT CLAIMS THAT THESE RUSTLERS WERE BETRAYED BY ANOTHER BAND OF THEIR COMPATRIOTS WHO SURRENDERED WITH THEIR WEAPONS TO THE EPMG FORCES EARLY THE NEXT MORNING. THE SURRENDER OF THESE EIGHT WAS ANNOUNCED ON RADIO ASMARA THE EVENING OF DEC. 20.

3. ON DEC. 17 THE LAST CONVOY ARRIVED FROM MASSAWA. A FUEL CONVOY DEPARTED FOR MASSAWA ON DEC. 21 WITH A HEAVY ESCORT FORCE. SALES OF MOGAS REMAIN SUSPENDED ALTHOUGH SMALL QUANTITIES OF PREMIUM BECOME AVAILABLE SPORADICALLY. KEROSENE IS SOLD ONLY INFREQUENTLY AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH STRICT RATIONING. THOSE FUEL CONVOYS WHICH HAVE ARRIVED IN ASMARA SINCE THE RESUMPTION OF TRAVEL ON THE MASSAWA ROAD IN LATE NOVEMBER HAVE CONCENTRATED ON BULK FUEL FOR EELPA AND AVGAS. THE MOGAS SHORTAGE IS NOT EXPECTED TO BE RELIEVED IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. FREIGHT FOR ADDIS IS PRESENTLY BEING LOADED ON TRUCKS ON THE EXPECTATION OF A SOUTHBOUND CONVOY. A NORTHBOUND CONVOY IS SAID TO BE IN ADIGRAT AWAITING AN ESCORT TO COME TO ASMARA. THE THREE TIMES WEEKLY EAL SERVICE TO HUMERA WAS SUSPENDED INDEFINITELY LAST WEEK FOR "SECURITY REASONS".

4. THE VISIT OF A SENIOR EPMG MILITARY OFFICIAL REPORTED REF A IS NOW ALLEGED TO BE THAT OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ETHIOPIAN ARMY. HE IS REPORTED TO BE HERE TO REPLACE TEMPORARILY THE AILING CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR COL. FIKRU.

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